

**SMFA Summit Interview with Blair Hickey and Brian Wold  
(co-founders of CastingAbout), premiering 28 May 2021, 12pm PDT**

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Everyone, I am thrilled to introduce to you, Blair Hickey, Brian Wold. I love you guys; this is CastingAbout, you guys.

**Blair Hickey**

Hi, Bonnie! It's so good to see you. We, I, you need to do one of these every week, just so we can do this.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I'll get back to you on that; I will. It's a quite a big production here but, of course, for those of you who were a part of SMFA Summit 2020, you know Blair and Brian because we did this chat before. It's going to be different this time, but also, for those who are not aware of CastingAbout, I would like to start with what is CastingAbout, and why do people watching this need to know y'all exist?

**Blair Hickey**

Immediately, immediately.

**Brian Wold**

Drop what you're doing.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, stop... be like... stop watching live... no no wait.

**Brian Wold**

No, keep watching live.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah.

**Brian Wold**

That's what you need a second screen for.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

That's right.

**Blair Hickey**

Okay. So, real quick, I think, easy way to do this is I think a lot of your viewers are going to be familiar with something like Actors Access where you submit yourself for a role. We call that a

sales tool, because you are selling yourself for a role, right? And there are ways to do that smartly and to sell your story and to say, "Hey, let me help tell this story; I can do that." In between all those salesy things comes the marketing, and that is building relationships with people in town who need your story, and who are going to think of you when it comes time down the road. So, CastingAbout is that it's a marketing tool, we list, we got a team of researchers shout out to them, they're amazing. And every day, they're tracking every union project that's casting in New York and LA. We do TV and film in LA. We do TV, film, and Equity theatre in New York.

And the idea is, here's all these projects, here are the people, the casting directors, the associates, the assistants who are doing those projects. It's sort of who are the people in town who are telling stories, and who are the ones you should know, and who are the ones who should know you, and why. And then there's tools to keep track of those people and tag them and group them and add datestamp notes so you have a history of your interaction with them. It's all the marketing relationship building stuff that we should be doing in between auditions that quite frankly, some actors -- including this one -- don't spend enough time actually doing every day.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

So, can we talk about what the doing is because it's not, you don't use CastingAbout to submit on a role, during specific casting periods, but you do learn who, not just the casting directors are for the projects, but also their teams, their associates, assistants. So, what is the daily work of using CastingAbout?

### **Blair Hickey**

Go, Brian.

### **Brian Wold**

This is such, this is such a relationship-based business. It's, you know, it's the who you know and who knows you and what are the ways that you connect with people and so on. And then one of the things I think that a lot of actors think is, "I just need to get an audition. I'm going to walk into the room and somehow some magical something is going to happen. And I'm going to be famous." And there's a lot of space in there that I think doesn't, doesn't always work out that way. Let's just say it doesn't always work out that way. I mean, we, we talk to a lot of casting directors and one of the things we heard from one of them was, he said, "You know, with my office we try to bring in, maybe 25% if we can, of we can people we already know."

### **Blair Hickey**

Of people we don't know.

### **Brian Wold**

Wait, people 80%... you already know, sorry, I said it backwards.

**Blair Hickey**

Yes, that one yes.

**Brian Wold**

So, 80% of the people you bring in for auditions are people you already know, so it's people you already have a relationship with, it's people that you've, you've got history with them. And so, if I'm an unknown actor if this casting director doesn't know me, and the first time they see my headshot is when it goes flying by, in a submission as they're going 100 miles an hour, it might be too late. Like I got to get ahead of this somehow and CastingAbout is one of the tools that lets you start to figure out: "Who are the people like me? Who are the people that tell the same stories that I tell? Who are the people that are kind of in the same place in their careers that I'm at? Where there's a synergy?" And then begin to find ways to build relationship with them, so that you get ahead of this whole audition process so that once the audition... you know, when they're seeing submissions go flying by, they stop and they go, "Wait, wait, wait. I've seen that guy before."

**Blair Hickey**

Yeah, or better yet...

**Brian Wold**

So that's the... that's the big picture concept.

**Blair Hickey**

I want to be like even go one step, sort of back from that, I mean, yes, when my picture goes by, they're like, "Oh, yeah, Blair. He's not right for this but, oh, yeah, Blair," and that's fine too, right? That's keeping me in mind.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

That's brand recognition.

**Blair Hickey**

Yes.

**Brian Wold**

Yep yep.

**Blair Hickey**

Yeah, and if you go one step before that the ultimate goal is I want to create the kind of relationship where with as many different casting directors in town and considering the noise you have to cut through this is not going to be a ton of people, but if I have a small group of people that every time they get a new script and they start reading, and they go, "Oh, you know, what Blair'd be good for this. Let's get Blair in here for this." Now this is even before the

breakdown goes out right? This is like, I pop into the head, because I have that kind of relationship. So that's going to take time. So, you can do this in a lot of different ways. I mean practically speaking, if you do get an audition, you go to CastingAbout you look up the project you memorize the names of everybody in the room. I mean, it's, but actors, all the time go to an audition I say, "Who are you meeting?" and they go, "Uhhh."

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Shocking.

### **Blair Hickey**

Yeah. Memorize the people in the room and then you click on their name and it loads, every project they're currently working on right now and everything they've done in the last 10 years. So now it's, I mean, I've done this too, like I'm looking at a script going, "Ah, how far do I push this comedy, what's the tone here? Am I going, am I going 'Office', am I, am I pulling back, am I going 'Community' you know am I, where am I going on this?" I look up the casting director. I look at all their projects for last 10 years and I go, "Oh, tone, tone, tone, tone, tone, tone. Okay, now I have a clue. This is the kind of story they usually tell. Now I'm going to lean in that direction." So, you know practically just going in the room knowing who they are, what they, what kind of storyteller they are right?

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

That works even if you're dealing with a pilot where you have no idea what the tone is.

### **Blair Hickey**

Yes, you can read the logline and go, "Okay, so I get it and that's similar to this project they cast, and that one and that one and that one and I've seen those." Now, at least you have a guiding light. And this is I should say this is not "how to do the scene", right? Because, don't try to figure out what they want, instead it's just for you to be like, "Okay, this is, this puts me in a space and let me play in that space. So, I go deliver my story in a way that feels right and if they want to adjust me that's fine," but at least you go in, maybe with less of a question mark, right? You kind of land somewhere. Now, that's great if you have the audition, if, if you're doing the research ahead of time. Like Brian said, you want to make your target list. Who in town is telling the stories that you were born to tell? I think of it as who needs you the most right? So, you instead of this 5, 600-person list you get down to 20, 30 whatever it is, and then you start following their career. What are they working on now? What's coming up next? What Artios award did they win? What's their social media links? We have all the social media links for people who have those.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Get a little specific about that because this is something that shocks clients when I go, "Let's go into CastingAbout together and look up some of your targets," and I'll show them in the

account like where that information is and they're just like, "Wait a second." So, could you talk a little bit about mechanics of that?

**Brian Wold**

So, CastingAbout is a pretty simple grid kind of system where we have all the projects and then all the people working on those projects and if you click on the names of any of those people, it'll pop up a little box, and it'll tell you more about that person, not just that one project but the other projects that they're currently working on. Plus, archive, going back probably about 10 years of other stuff that they've worked on as well, which is no longer currently active. But it's, you know, it's all listed there. And right in that box there are all these little icons for Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, their website, and I feel like I'm missing some...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Twitter.

**Blair Hickey**

Twitter.

**Brian Wold**

Twitter, Twitter. And so, if they use social media in a professional way, we'll include that right there and it's a great way for you to learn more about them, to see what kinds of things they talk about. To start to build connections, we're a big fan in social media, of learning using it as a learning experience first. Don't just jump on to somebody, you know to DM somebody and be like, "Look at me, look at me, look at me," it's like walking into a party and...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

The copy and paste, the "Dear casting director..."

**Blair Hickey**

"Dear casting director, can you please consider me for anything you're doing."

**Bonnie Gillespie**

"I'm such a fan of everything you've ever cast." Clearly, you're not, you have no idea.

**Brian Wold**

Right, yeah, and especially if they've heard it 10 other times, or 100 other times. But it's a way to build... I mean relationships are authentic organic kinds of things and you can't cut and paste into a relationship. So, if you want to build a relationship with somebody build it in a way that is between you and this person. Not between you and "dear casting director," some generic kind of a thing. And social media is that same is that same way. It's a part of that same strategy so if you want to communicate with somebody on social media, communicate with them where they're at. Which means finding out where they're at, and what's important to them and what

are the things that, that are going to make their day better. And one of the things we talk about in relationship marketing is turning it around. Thinking about it from a different perspective, right? Because a lot of people think relationship marketing is leech-y, it's, it's me me me. "Look at me."

### **Blair Hickey**

Yeah. "Hey stranger do something for me."

### **Brian Wold**

"Pay attention to me. Please look at my submission, please come to my showcase," it's all about just sort of this thing and a lot of people are like, are shy to do that. But relationships are two-way streets, so if you start from, what can I do to help you, and you answer that question in a way that's truthful and real, "What can I really actually do to help you to make your job better, to make you look better in front of your boss, to make the productions you work on better, to make your day more happy?" All of those things are great ways to come into a relationship and people will love you for doing it. So do that.

### **Blair Hickey**

And I found too doing that kind of research, you end up with a store of information that you don't know when you can use it or if you'll use it, but it's there. And if you do it enough... you know, I have my target list and there's a casting director on it and I follow on social media and it mentions that she's on a podcast and so I go flag the podcast and I have some time and I listen to it because she's on my target list. And I get an idea of her and I learn a little bit more about her as a storyteller and that's great.

Two months later, I get an audition and I get to go in and you just come in armed with, you know you're there to do your job so it's, "Hi, how are you," and you do your job and you play and it's all great. But I found that the more authentic you are when you come in you do your job, suddenly doors open, like you know, "Blair thanks, that was great. Thanks so much. How you been," now there's time to chat because I've been a pro. And I can say "I've been great and by the way, I listened to you on the thing and nice job. I've always liked that host before. Was he nice to work with?" Right? Or whatever it was, and she starts talking about how nervous she was and, "I don't like the sound of my voice and how did I sound."

And now, as, and I've said this before, we're talking peer to peer, and that's my goal. Right? And, and you just don't know when you're gonna... so I don't necessarily have to reach out and be like, "Dear stranger, I heard you on a podcast, please bring me in." I just know who these people are and because I'm doing the work, when the paths cross, you know, you, professionally can say, "Hey, I'm aware of your work and I like what you're doing."

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Well one of the things that we really emphasize in the "Self-Management for Actors" work is having a true north, and knowing that not all casting directors are going to be on your true north path. And so, as I hear you talking about targeting and having that information available, it feels overwhelming when we consider, "I gotta know all of the hundreds of casting directors." But it's, you're really talking about having a target list of a dozen or two targets.

### **Brian Wold**

Yeah, and the good and the good thing about that is you don't have to know all of them, you know? Sometimes you get into that sort of that place where you get frozen in space, I have so much to do I can't do anything. I'm not gonna do anything at all and you get stuck.

### **Blair Hickey**

Option paralysis.

### **Brian Wold**

Yeah, and you get stuck not doing anything, you know. Start building a relationship with one casting director, if that's all you can do. If that's all you know between the jobs and the pandemic and what's going on with your, your life and whatever, if that's all you can do do that. If you can get strong working relationships with let's say 20 casting directors where they know you, where they think of you, where they know the kind of work you're doing, where you're staying actively involved with that, you're gonna have a great career. And, and that's a decent number like that's a number I can think about like maybe there's a way I could get there, and that doesn't freak me out. But not just, it...

### **Blair Hickey**

It doesn't mean... the 20 can rotate too, by the way. You know you can have somebody in your list and it's not working out and you've tried to contact and they're doing other stuff or you don't know they're on hiatus and, you know, so drop 'em out for a little bit, pull somebody in. You know, it can rotate on you and that focused targeted. It's ultimately it pays off way more than you know what ultimately is just spam and junk mail otherwise.

### **Brian Wold**

Yeah, and I think you know this is a place where sometimes we start to talk about finding the people that are kind of your sometimes people say your tribe or you know the people that are that are sort of, you know, that like you. Blair and I talk about what story do you tell, right, because we're storytellers and so what's the story that you tell. It's like you said, Bonnie What's your true north. It's a little bit of that same kind of a thing. Like what is it, where do I want to go, and then who are the people who are going that same way.

So, it would be great to just randomly meet casting director X on the street but I don't know anything about them. I don't know what they're doing. I don't know if they're doing the same

kind of stuff that I'm doing, and sometimes opportunity pulls you in a direction that's good, and that's great, right? When lightning strikes in that way when you win the lottery, that's, that's fantastic. But sometimes you get an opportunity, and it pulls you in a direction that isn't the direction you would want to go. And so, I think part of knowing what you know, being able to navigate that. The first step of that is what is my true north? What is right for me? Where do I want to go, where am I now, where am I going next? What are the people that are going to that are that are the right people to surround myself with, if I have that opportunity? And if you don't know who you are and what story you tell, how are you going to know?

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Well, it's the, the visual I use is you know you've put a pin in a map up here you know you're the glowing orb right here and here's this pin where you're headed, and you don't necessarily know all the twists and turns your roads gonna take as you head on that true north path, but you know a lot of directions you need to not be going. And just being able to say, when I hear so and so saying well, postcards worked for me and this one saying workshops worked for me and this one saying this way that way you can hear it and go for your true north. For your path. For your buyers. That does not mean I need to go chase that, try that, spend that money on that, you know and get into that whole actor busy work space because those are not people along my true north path.

### **Brian Wold**

Right and sometimes...

### **Blair Hickey**

And it will be different for everybody you know and, certainly, if I could jump in, just because I struggled with this a little bit. When, when we say, you know, "What story do you tell?" Let's be clear, we're not sorta typecast... we're not like the one role that we play, right? We're not talking about that at all, we're talking about that unique thing that you have your your superpower that thing that only you have because you're unique, that you can bring to any script, right? Comedy, drama, stage, film, commercials, whatever. It's the, it's that Bonnie thing, the Brian thing, the Blair thing that no one else can create and that's awesome.

Because once you figure out what that is and you realize you can bring it almost as a gift to any script here let me offer you my spin on this script. If you can use it great if you can't, okay, because it's authentic and real to me, right? And that's that mantra now when I go into a room, I always say yes, it's their script, but it's my story. And so, I, and that helps me a lot because I'm the, you know, don't get it wrong guy. So, so once you know that thing you can bring, then you're like, who needs that thingy the most, right? Then, then you then all of a sudden, your list starts paring itself down.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Yes.

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Bonnie Gillespie



**Brian Wold**

Yeah, and the benchmark of understanding that you bring something unique, that puts a benchmark in where now you can compare everything against yourself. "Did I do what I know I can do?" Not, "Did they like me," because that's so far outside your control, but there's so many people... walk into the room. "What do you want? I don't want to offend. I don't want to do it wrong. I don't want to..." like there's so much of that. Well, that's 100% out of your control. Now if they asked you to do something a certain way, do it that way. Right? Sure.

But, but, but come in as an artist, and, and, and tell the story the way that you tell the story because that unique thing is what makes you different from everybody else out there. And so, you know, you can evaluate an audition not in terms of did I get a job, you can evaluate an audition in terms of did I meet my own standard for doing telling the story that I wanted to tell? And maybe they loved it, maybe they didn't love it. That doesn't matter anymore, but now it's all about. I know what I'm doing, and I'm going to go in and do it.

**Blair Hickey**

You know.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

And I showed them the Bonnie Gillespie experience. And now they know, even if it's not right for this project at this time, for whatever reasons, they know what they're going to get when they bring me back in.

**Brian Wold**

Yeah, it's easy to say. It's super hard to do but it's easy to say.

**Blair Hickey**

I tell a story like that is so much more fun than doing the version of I don't know if this is what they want or not.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah, and how do I figure out... like back in the day when we would people and we're out, you know, there's a waiting room with 100 people in it and you start listening at the door of like, "What's the person before me doing and how can I use that to inform what I do and throw out whatever prep I had done before," and it's like, if the gift of Zoom auditions has done anything it's that your waiting room is private. There is no more of that getting in your head about what everybody ahead of you is doing 'cause you can't even see the sign in sheet anymore. That's a gift. No, I know. So, quarantinetimes obviously.

While we're talking here, what is shifting in the trends that you're noticing in CastingAbout, in terms of production coming back, and where it's centered and if some of the players have just

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bounced out, they're not coming back, they, they just took down their shingle and said, "Nah, I'm good"? Or, you know, what patterns are emerging because I know y'all love to track patterns as much as I do.

**Blair Hickey**

Yes, yes. Well, thankfully, most people are still I mean there's some people changed and we saw a lot of associates and assistants kind of bounce around to you know they change offices. A lot of people are still there. People are still engaged. They might not have the office, necessarily, you know anymore. And actually, there's something researchers you dealing with there's a lot of casting directors who still do have an office it's -- how often do they go check mail -- you know? We're checking in on that. But, so a couple things. First of all, we're starting to see things come back, you know, which is a lot of stuff was suspended, some of that stuff died, you know, it looks like Brian just did too. He just I said it and he fell out of his chair.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

He fell right out of his chair.

**Brian Wold**

There's, there's a little noise on the other side of the door so the door just got closed.

**Blair Hickey**

Not a problem.

**Brian Wold**

I don't know if you guys are hearing it, but I was.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Oh no, it was a great like pratfall though, like that could have been....

**Blair Hickey**

And I had a child wandering around here too so we may have all kinds of guests, you know.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Fabulous.

**Brian Wold**

Every once in a while, Blair's cat just jumps on the back of his of his chair and I actually hope it happens.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

It's a sign of good luck. Right?

**Blair Hickey**

I think so, yes. So, what we've seen productions, start to come back, we're not at full capacity, you know yet. But, you know, we're doing a rough count in Los Angeles, we look at active projects and that's anything with a heartbeat, right? So, it could be on hiatus, could be on hold, could be actively casting, maybe it's shooting, but it's just it's not wrapped, it's not canceled. You know it's there somewhere. And there's like, 850 of those right now in LA. In New York...

**Brian Wold**

And that's union projects.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I was gonna say, y'all track union projects.

**Blair Hickey**

Yes, it's just union. In New York, we're at, like, somewhere between 550 and 600 active projects...

**Bonnie Gillespie**

That's great!

**Blair Hickey**

And that's without Equity theatre. You know, without Broadway. Broadway's shut down right? So that's great to see and that's still not maximum capacity yet.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

No, but that's more than I would anticipate like, especially for that to not even include Broadway right now because that's usually the bulk of the New York numbers. Wow.

**Blair Hickey**

Yeah, it's great, it's you know, pilots and, and that's part of what we're seeing, too, is because we're tracking projects that cast within a region – now, if we really broke it down some of those projects that are casting in LA, are duplicate projects casting in New York because they're casting in both places, right? So, they actually, you know, so they don't, you can't quite add them together to get a total there's some overlap.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Could be shooting in an even third place or fourth... yeah, who knows.

**Blair Hickey**

100% And we've seen that a lot is things are bouncing around a lot. We're seeing a lot of stuff cast in New York and LA and Vancouver and Toronto, all at the same time and casting teams working with each other, more so maybe than they ever had before.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I like that.

**Blair Hickey**

Because it's collaborative, and they can because this has opened things up, which is which is, I think, kind of nice to see.

**Brian Wold**

Yeah, at the same time virtual auditions have opened up opportunities for actors in a lot of different markets as well. I think, you know, casting technology moves it at one speed and people move at a different speed and so some casting directors have really embraced this and they really kind of wrapped around their arms around the opportunity that if I'm just gonna do an audition with, you know, "I don't care whether there's snow outside or not. I want to find the best actor of the people that I can see." So, and so, I think that's opening up some opportunities for actors. Whether that's going to stay as the world opens up more and more, I don't want to predict one way or the other but I have a feeling that for many projects, and for for many casting directors that opportunity will still be there and I think a lot of casting directors are going to become more and more comfortable with casting a wide net and saying, "Bring me good work, regardless of what city you're in."

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Whereas before, there used to be this stopper of, "We can only look at locals," and now we can look anywhere, and we'll figure out the budgetary issues later but it just makes casting more fun to find the best person wherever they are.

**Brian Wold**

Yeah, and I think for certain types of things, there's, you're still going to want to bring a person into a room, I think there are, you know, there's every project is different and there's different types of scenarios and so on, but, you know, it's when you realize that your producer might be in Europe and, you know, your director might be, you know, somewhere else and you're here, you know, even if you bring an actor into the room, a lot of casting directors were using the remote casting tools on the back-end of things to get all their collaborators on board.

Over the last year, Breakdown Services has put together a number of tools and is continuing to work on a number of those things, so EcoCast Live is a virtual audition system that is that is out, and a lot of casting directors are using, a lot a lot of actors are getting experience with it. It's pretty cool because you don't have to download anything, you can do it on your phone, etc., etc. But my, my thing with this is, you don't want to be dealing with all the technology of, you know, virtual auditions on the day of the audition.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Yeah.

**Brian Wold**

You know, so figure it out now. Because I think this is something that is happening, and I think it's going to continue; I suspect it will start to sort of slide back towards in person auditions to some degree. But I think, I think virtual auditions are going to be a part of an actor's life, and that means figure out what your backdrop looks like, figure out what your lighting looks like, figure out what your technology looks like, figure out where your battery backup in case the power goes out, how do you control the room so that the sound is not distracting. I don't think you have to be a filmmaker, but I think, you know, if there's stuff happening like crazy behind you, it's super hard to stay focused on, you know, the the thing that you're doing. And so, getting that stuff figured out now, I think it's time well spent.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I think a lot of that stuff gets used as a stopper anyway. That people will say, " Well, I was just so distracted by your backdrop," and it's like that's that's not the reason for the NO, but it becomes a really easy NO...

**Blair Hickey**

Yes.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

...when the person's already not right and I'm like why not eliminate all the things that could be used as a NO. And then it's just a NO because it didn't work and I don't have to second guess, like, what color I wore or whatever.

**Blair Hickey**

Right, the for actors too, they kind of fall back on that as an excuse. You know I couldn't get it all together and you know. And ultimately, I think, yes, you should have as much of a pro setup as you can and be, you know, help the casting director out. But, but then, for me anyway it's been that reminder like okay, ultimately, it still is about story. It's about me doing my, my thing and... I don't know if... this isn't scientific it's sort of more just a gut feeling for me, this is kind of my impression. I don't even know if it's right.

But what I'm feeling is the whole pandemic has been really interesting with how familiar we've all gotten to this setup right here. I mean this has become... right? And the fact that there's stuff in the background and we've, you know, seen into in celebrities now doing interviews and they're at the house and they may not be as made-up as they've been and they're going to the, you know award shows in hoodies and it's, there's a... we've become a little more casual, in our interactions I think in a good way, you know, in a way that's... we're focusing on... okay, let's

have the conversation and I get you're at home and I'm at home and whatever, but let's just have a conversation. Some of that stuff's going away.

So, I saw it, I started to think this, you know, at the very beginning of the whole pandemic when everything shut down, right? It was just panic time. And we started to watch, follow what casting directors were up to and so many of them were doing Instagram lives and then just chats and Q and A's and like, "Hey guys, I'm at home. Let's talk." And, and that's sort of and continued in a way where maybe some of the built-in barriers between actors and casting directors, ironically, in this time, have gone away. Because it used to be. I can only, say, I could mail a postcard and maybe they read it and I wouldn't know. Or I could go to the audition and see them for that three minutes, and then leave, and now there's more interviews online, there's more Q and A's, now there's Clubhouse, now there's people chatting. Now there's more of this sort of back-and-forth interaction and actors creating more content on their own and casting directors doing more stuff. And I like that.

I just see that trend continuing where it's a little more casual, where content creation is going up on all sides, where the conversation is a little bit easier to have. And so more than ever, pay attention to what people are doing. Track casting directors' careers, what conversations are they having? What, you know, what opportunities are out there just to chat with them or to learn more about them as a person? Because they're out there now, maybe more than ever before. And, you know, and then find the ones who are doing this project and you've created your own content that's exactly that. And now when you say, "Hey, maybe check out my webisode," it's not about like, "Hey, look at me," it's more like, "Hey, I know you love this. We created something that is that. Thought you might enjoy it." You know, it's getting a little more conversation a little more specific, and I kind of dig that.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

My theory on that is that we've had to go more high-tech in certain ways which has caused us to get way more transparent and stripped down and human in other ways, because we can't do the humanity in person, the same way. How do we become more human, we use our high tech to become more connected as humans and sharing like what is the backstory? What is my real life without my glamsquad or whatever?

So, I wonder though when you said you know somebody is working on something or has a taste of something, something that they're into, that you know you've created content that aligns with their, their vibe. Where... I'm thinking specifically about people who want to see more stories of underrepresented populations, want to see more conversations that we describe as "the hard conversations." You know, we're three white people having this conversation so it's really easy for us to talk about it, academically, but the truth of it is storytelling is evolving and shifting in some really meaningful and necessary and long overdue ways. Can I use the tools of CastingAbout to know, and the tracking that I'm doing of these people, to know who aligns

with messaging that feels important to me as a storyteller, on a, on a level of activism, or amplifying messages that I think are important?

### **Blair Hickey**

In the way that tracking somebody's career, right? Like Brian said, it's it's looking at this, not so much of like, "Ooh, who can do something for me." Right, but it's flipping it and saying, "No, no, let me. Here's somebody doing really interesting work like right now. They're casting four projects, and I've read the loglines for all four and two of them are on the air right now so I've watched episodes of them. And I've read articles about them and then here's their social media where they're talking about these things. So, I'm seeing how their work as an artist is tying into their -- what they say online as a person and I'm getting to know what's important to them as a person as an artist. And you know what, that's why I became an artist, or whatever it is right? That's why, you know, and so I want to get more involved in that," you know, and I think... because ultimately, hopefully, by tracking what somebody, what kind of project somebody takes on and then kind of stuff to talk about social media and then how what they're saying in interviews, you're learning about them as a person as an artist, not as, "What can I learn so this person can give me a job."

Right, so it's... and one thing I've noticed, I think, in, you know, the golden age of TV or whatever they're saying now with all the streaming and all the opportunities we have, is I've seen storytelling become more specific. I love that, because there's opportunity now to tell a very specific story, and personal stories. You know, I think something like "Fleabag", you know, which was a one woman show a very specific personal story that she wanted to tell, that spun to become this amazing thing, you know. "Insecure". Issa Rae wanted to tell a very specific story about being a Black woman in Los Angeles and she wanted to tell her story. But look, and that's there's, you know when you're writing the old adage that you know the more specific you get the more universal it becomes. So, I'm seeing that in storytelling, which to me says, all those, you know, we say, what, "What story do you tell best?" That's becoming so important because that sort of generic, happy, handsome, pretty, active person who can do everything... give me something specific. Give me, give me your specific voice to lend to this specific story, because there's so many opportunities now let's mix it up and see what comes out.

### **Bonnie Gillespie**

Oh, I love that.

### **Brian Wold**

I think that the as the world starts to flatten a little bit, particularly during a pandemic, but also as coming out of this thing, I think it's going to stay a little bit more flat that way. I think that there are more and broader opportunities for people who have something they want to say. And, and that is only good, right, to be able to allow different outlets for people who might not have been able to crack some ceiling somewhere, but different ways that you can, that you can tell something. So, if you're, if you're the kind of artist that has that has a story to tell -- and I'm

guessing you're the kind of artist, whoever you are that's listening, you're the kind of artist that has a story to tell -- you are in a really interesting time right now where I think opportunities do exist and so leaning into that, "I'm a unique individual and that the stories that I tell, have, have meaning and have weight and are and are appropriate," is... it's a really good time to be doing that.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Where do you see... I know we can't see the future, we don't... we don't know... we don't know. Where do you see us headed as, you know, this is all the #CreatingTheHollywoodWeWant, just in the years we've known each other, we've seen so much more autonomy on the part of the actor. So much more empowerment around those small stories that -- back in the studio system days -- would never have even been considered and at the beginning of our journeys were like, "Yeah, that's that quirky indie thing that no one's ever gonna see," and now they're having their, like you said, they're coming into their, their heyday with that spotlight just so bright right now.

**Blair Hickey**

If anything, they were just little, like, "Oh, that's a cute little thing that you'd use as a stepping stone to do a real project."

**Bonnie Gillespie**

"We'll let you do that cute little thing that nobody's gonna watch but, there's the real thing you have to do." And today it's like yeah...

**Brian Wold**

That cute little thing is the real project.

**Blair Hickey**

So sorry, I interrupted you, Bonnie, you... I don't think you were done.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I want to know where do you see us headed, they... with this knowing what has already happened in the time that we've, we've collectively been doing this, where, where are we headed?

**Blair Hickey**

Holograms.

**Brian Wold**

Holograms. Yeah, I think, you know, it's easy to get lost in the technology and you know the change that's going on in, in the way the industry is and so on and that's all great. It's worth sort of stepping back at some point and saying, "Be an artist." You know, because storytelling is still storytelling and telling great stories and conveying a scene as an actor -- says the guy who's a



terrible actor. But being, you know, being, being authentic, in a scene is, no matter what -- all the technology change and all of the other thing -- no matter what, tell great stories is still going to be the course cornerstone of great art, no matter what. No matter you know, no matter what else changes.

So yeah, there's a lot of stuff happening, but, but as an artist, the one thing that hasn't changed is: Be a great artist, you know. And, and all this other stuff is about clearing the way so that you can be a great artist, and, you know, we spend a lot of our time talking around the edges of this stuff, but it there's, there's a point about it, that is, yeah, a lot of things are changing but some things are really just staying exactly the same: Be amazing, you know, be compelling, capture the human condition, do all the things that you know how to do. And, yeah, so that is a non-answer to your question but it popped into my head and felt like it was worth saying.

### **Blair Hickey**

No, it's it's always been important to do that but maybe becomes even more important because that sort of specific, unique voice is a trend we're going in and I hope it continues. You know, I think if you go backwards, you know, the classic TV days, it was kind of all about the advertising, you know? It was the the soap said, "I want a show so we can talk about soap and I want it to appeal to this demographic, at this time of day," and that dictated the script. And you know the look of the set and what they could say and use as props even right? And now that, even, you know, when that morphed into that kind of three-channel network TV we all knew where I think if you go back now and you look at, you know, even something classic and amazing, the "Family Ties" and the "Cheers" and all those things. They're amazing and wonderful, but they're a little more generic than some of the stuff that's going on now because they had to appeal to the wider audience. And now with so many different outlets and channels you can be more narrow, you can be more specific. Which is amazing because there's so many opportunities. So, that unique, specific voice... and I think things are going to continue to go that way, which is great because it's gonna allow for new voices, and it's gonna allow for the quirky voice, which didn't have a place before but now, you know, "Let's put you on on a certain streaming service."

### **Brian Wold**

Blair's going to be good cop and I'm going to be bad cop, how's that... or you know something like that. How's that? I'm going to take away all your excuses, right? If you're an artist and you are not creating the Hollywood you want right now, what is stopping you from doing that right? Because part of what's happened is that the, the opportunity is now there for you to tell the stories that you want to tell. And so, the good news is you can. The other side of that is, get off your... you know, stand up and do something because...

### **Blair Hickey**

Why ya gotta talk to me like that right now Brian?

**Bonnie Gillespie**

You're bein' read right now.

**Brian Wold**

I, you know, the, the, the I mean it as, I mean to be, you know, to be an empowering sort of thing, the opportunity is there. And so, to the extent that, if you're sitting around thinking, "Wow, it's too bad that I didn't get enough that I didn't get the opportunities handed to me," you're looking at it the wrong way. Those opportunities are there, go get them.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Perfectly said, I love it. Your bad cop is fantastic, Brian. Thank you.

**Brian Wold**

I'm the worst of bad cops.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Please let everybody know where to find y'all. I know CastingAbout obviously but if people want to stalk you personally if you're into that, if you could share... where...

**Blair Hickey**

You can... probably Twitter's probably the best place, I'm @BlairHickeyLA, as in Los Angeles. On Twitter, that's probably the easiest place to do it and happy to hear from you. I want to hear from actors too, who are like doing this, you know? Who are like have their target list or somebody that they were able to build a relationship with because that's motivating and I love that stuff so let me know.

**Brian Wold**

We're really active on Twitter and Facebook. It's one of the ways that we pass information about what's going on in the industry so actors can certainly follow at @CastingAbout on Twitter. And at @CastingAboutLA and @CastingAboutNY on Facebook. We have two separate pages but you can certainly keep track of us that way. It's a great way to quickly be in the know about, you know all the cool stuff that our researchers are finding. And, you know, certainly, certainly that but as Blair said we love hearing from actors to sort of tell us what, what you're seeing, what, you know, what you liked that we said, what you hated that we said. That's how we learn.

**Blair Hickey**

So, I'll do this too. Yeah, I'll say, you know, a favor because with CastingAbout -- it's information, and there's a few tools you know the tagging and grouping and notes and all that stuff, but how people use those tools it's kind of up to them. And so, I want to hear from folks how they've used it, or how they wish they could use it or what other new tool they have, you know. Because first I'm going to steal that idea from my own career. Which is awesome.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

Absolutely.

**Blair Hickey**

And then, and then we want to add more stuff, you know that makes this sort of tracking organizing marketing stuff better, easier, faster. So, so, let us know how you use it and what's worked, that would be great.

**Bonnie Gillespie**

As always, thank you guys so much, I just adore you both and what you've built in the world and what you continue to see for where we're headed. So, thank you. I always have a ball with you both.

**Brian Wold**

We love you too. You're the best.

**Blair Hickey**

So good to see you and we'll... we're doing this again, when? Tomorrow? Is that when?

**Bonnie Gillespie**

I think that's what we decided, right? Thanks, guys.

**Blair Hickey**

All right, thank you.

**Brian Wold**

Thank you.